

**A UNITED MINISTRY
FOR
A UNITED CHURCH**

**Revised Edition
1967**

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FOREWORD

I commend this pamphlet dealing with the Rite of Unification of the Ministry for study by those who are concerned with this Rite both in our own Province and in other parts of the Anglican Communion. This Rite is a new contribution towards Church Union and does not pretend to depend on precedent because it deals with unprecedented situations. The position can be theologically defended and I am very grateful to Canon Sully for a great deal of thought and study put into this matter.

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Bishop of Calcutta
and
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NOTE ON THE REVISED EDITION, 1967

In 1965 the 3rd Revised Edition of the Ceylon Scheme, as amended in 1963, and the 4th Revised Edition of the North India/Pakistan Plan were issued, in both cases for the decision of the negotiating Churches. This pamphlet has therefore been revised so as to take account of what is relevant in these revisions, and the references are all to these latest editions of the Plan and the Scheme.

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A UNITED MINISTRY FOR A UNITED CHURCH

1. *Introduction* : The object of this pamphlet is to promote understanding of how, in our plans of union, we are seeking to secure from the outset a united and fully recognised ministry. We have in view particularly the plans for North India and Pakistan (N.I./P.), and Ceylon; and while we are writing particularly for Anglicans, we try to keep in view also the wider understanding and agreement needed in all the negotiating Churches. We deal specially with this problem of the ministry, not because it is the only problem or necessarily the most important, but for the reasons that

- (a) it is the aspect of these union plans which has come in for much misunderstanding and criticism; and which has been considerably clarified in the latest revisions and
- (b) it is an aspect in which we can thankfully recognise the fuller measure of agreement and understanding which is being given to our Churches in this matter.

We are particularly encouraged by the extensive agreement to be found in the plans issued in Nigeria and Ghana.

Our basic conviction in regard to the united ministry, as in regard to a united Church, is that God intends the unity of His Church (which is of its very nature) to be visibly expressed, "that the world may believe," and that such an expression of unity is itself a gift of God through His Holy Spirit in the Church. No form of inaugural service will of itself effect a united ministry; but it may be a fitting instrument whereby God may do His creating and healing work, and give His people an assurance that it has been done.

2. *An initial Unification* : We have been led to believe that, while a fuller and deeper unity will be given to a united Church as it grows in its common life (as is already to be seen in the Church of South India), it should be both possible and advisable to seek from God an initial unification of the ministry at the inauguration of union, and that this will greatly facilitate both the further recovery of unity and its wider recognition. For Anglicans this was expressed in Res. 56 (b) of the Lambeth Conference of 1948, which stated that

"The unification of the ministry in a form satisfactory to all the bodies concerned, either at the inauguration of the union or as soon as possible thereafter, is likely to be a prerequisite to success in all future proposals for the re-union of the Churches."

Lambeth 1958 held out a promise that such a unification should make possible relations of full communion between Anglican Provinces and the united Churches from the outset; and the Upper Houses of both Convocations in England adopted resolutions recognising that the proposed united Churches "would be a true part of the Church Universal—and possessed of the apostolic ministry of bishops, priests and deacons." The significance of this has sometimes been overlooked amid the confusion and misunderstanding of details. We are confident that, through the clarifications achieved in the 1965 editions of the Ceylon Scheme and the N.I./P. Plan, as well as through the adoption of similar methods by our brethren in West Africa and elsewhere, we are being led to a procedure which is in accordance with God's purpose and which may prove to be acceptable to the Churches.

3. *How to secure it* : There would appear to be three possible ways in which an initial unification could be secured :

- (a) by all other ministries accepting a straightforward Anglican ordination rite ; or
- (b) by a reciprocal re-ordination all round, or some other form of 'supplemental ordination' ;
or
- (c) by a unification rite which seeks from God the renewal and addition of grace where He sees it to be needed, in accordance with His will.

It is hardly necessary to go again into the reasons why (a) and (b) are generally rejected, though it may be noted that both appear to regard the unity of ministry as brought about by what one Church can give to the others. It is clearly the third form which has been adopted both in the Ceylon Scheme and in the N. I./P. Plan, and also in Nigeria and Ghana ; and it is in this form that recognition is fully given to the re-creation of visible unity as an act of God in His Church and for its ministry.

There has been, however, some confusion over the relation of a 'unification' rite to 'supplemental ordination', particularly among critics of the N. I./P. Plan. Thus in the negative section of the Report to the Convocations (P. 36) it was said, "The unification rites (of Ceylon and N.I./P.) in both cases, appear to us to be based on the theory of Supplemental Ordination, which we cannot accept. Further, we find it impossible to regard as satisfactory any form of service which seeks to unify episcopal and non-episcopal ministries by using the same rite for each... Thus in the unification of the episcopates the use of a reciprocal prayer and formula introduces confusion into the intention of the act, etc." Here apart from the fact that the separate rite of "Bringing Together" in the 3rd Edition of the Plan had diverted attention from the real character of the Unification rite itself, the criticism betrays a lack of precision in the use of the term 'supplemental ordination'.

It should by now be clear that the term 'supplemental ordination' has been used to indicate that an ordination already received is in some way deficient and has to be supplemented by a further ordination given by another body which presumably is in possession of those elements which are lacking. It has usually been associated with the theory proposed by Canon Quick that in a divided Church all ordinations are in a measure invalid or defective.

It has been the endeavour of our negotiators, whether in Ceylon or in N.I./P. to get rid of any trace of this theory which there might have been in earlier versions of the plans, though we must admit that it dies hard. In the proposed Inauguration Services care has been taken to guard against any idea that one participating Church is supplying to another something which the latter Church may hitherto have lacked. The Unification comes in each case *after* the Act of Union, so that it is not an act of still separated Churches, but of the already united Church. In it we are not asking God to give to the Baptists something which Anglicans may claim to possess, or to the Anglicans something which Methodists may appear to have. We are asking God to look in mercy upon us all, as would-be ministers of the united Church who now seek to be united; to ratify to us all the grace which He had already given us in our several ordinations; and, if in His perfect knowledge and holiness He sees that further strengthening by His grace is needed for ministering in the united Church, to supply just that need also. Thus the differing traditions of ministry, which God has blessed in the past, are to be brought together and shared within the united Church, and where there is anything further needed it is supplied by God, not by a uniting Church;—though supplied by God acting in and through His Church.

It should be noted here how such a unification within an already united Church differs from that

proposed in England for the Anglican-Methodist plan, where the unification of the two ministries anticipates the organic union in one Church which is to be achieved at a later stage.

4. *An agreed Intention* : In this view of the unification rite Ceylon and N.I./P. are in basic agreement, though they diverge in detail : thus

- (a) In the Ceylon method the bishops are first commissioned by the laying-on of hands of one representative from each uniting Church, and thus become the nucleus of the united ministry of the Church of Lanka. As such they then conduct the unification rites by laying hands on the presbyters in each diocese.
- (b) In N.I./P. (and in Nigeria) a group of one bishop and two presbyters is commissioned by a similar laying-on of hands by one representative from each Church, thus becoming the nucleus of the united ministry of the Church of N.I./P. Then, as such, this group lays hands on all the other ministers (bishops as well as presbyters).

In the Ceylon method God will have bestowed upon the bishops all that He sees to be needed for the enrichment and unity of their ministry, and the participation of a representative from each uniting Church in the commissioning of the bishops may be regarded as a sign and an assurance of a continuity in the traditions which God has used in the former separated ministries and may continue to use within the united ministry. Thus God can use the hands of the bishop (now a bishop of the united Church) for His bestowing of the enriched ministry within the united Church. Similarly in the N.I./P. Plan the group of three is being accepted and used by God in precisely the same way and for the same purpose, whether at the central Act or in the subsequent diocesan services.

It may be noticed also that in all these plans for unification, the common intention is becoming clear. Opinions may differ, even among experts, as to what a sick person may need for his healing ; but when we commit that sick person to God for the gift of wholeness which God alone can give, we can set aside such divergent opinions in our faith that God will do what in His love and wisdoms. He knows to be needed. So with our ministries there is now an agreed intention free from any improper ambiguities ; for, as para 10 (page 52) now states it positively, "The uniting Churches affirm that the intention of the rite is clearly and unambiguously set forth in the prayers to be used together with the Declaration and the Formula." Note the central sentence in the Prayer, (page 53),—

"Continue, we pray Thee, Thy blessings already given, and upon all Thy servants, called this day to a fresh dedication to Thy service pour out Thy Holy Spirit and endue each according to his need with grace and authority for the exercise of his ministry whether as bishop or as presbyter in the Church Universal and according to the order of the Church of North India/Pakistan." (Cf. Ceylon, P. 26)

5. *Further developments in N. I./P.* : The main difference between the N. I./P. or the West African schemes and the Ceylon Scheme is that in the former the unification rite includes both bishops and presbyters together in one act, each uniting Church presenting its whole ministry before God. In previous editions this feature in N. I./P had been obscured by the preliminary "Bringing Together of the Two Episcopates". That preliminary act had indeed been carefully agreed to at an earlier stage by a special subcommittee including bishops of both the Methodist and Anglican Churches, and it retained something of the objectionable features of a 'supplemental consecration'. It also raised questions when the bishops were to receive the laying-on of hands for a second

time with a very similar prayer in the Unification rite which followed. So at the 1965 meeting of the Negotiating Committee the complete omission of this preliminary act was welcomed as a manifest clarification and a removal of difficulties, though the Committee still left it open to the two episcopal Churches to consider whether some such preliminary act might be deemed desirable before the inauguration Services.

But this omission of the "Bringing Together" has served to throw the whole emphasis upon the rite of Unification itself where minor changes in wording make clear the intention of its covering both bishops and presbyters. Thus the uniting Churches believe "that any difference between bishops in the differing traditions, or between ministers episcopally or otherwise ordained will be thus transcended, and that by such transcending of these and other differences, as they are known to God Himself, the Church of N.I./P. will receive from Him at the outset a ministry fully and without exception accredited in the eyes of all its members, and, so far as may be, of the Church throughout the world." (Plan, p. 52, para 12). So far this change appears to have met with general acceptance, not to say, relief, and there has been no suggestion from either of the two episcopal Churches that any preliminary act should still be considered necessary.

It was with a view to a further clarifying of the intention of the Representative Act of Unification that, on the initiative of the U. C. N. I. delegation at the 1965 meeting, the proposal was adopted that four ministers from outside the area should share in the commissioning of the bishop and two presbyters who carry out the rest of the unification rite. These four should include two bishops in the historic episcopate, with the suggestion that one of them may be invited from the C.S.I. and one from an Indian Church in the Orthodox tradition. In this way the

bishop, whether chosen from the Anglican or the Methodist tradition, will, with the two presbyters, receive the first laying-on of hands with prayer by a group which will include three bishops in the historic episcopate. It may be noted that the Ceylon scheme had already adopted the idea that its additional bishops at the inauguration should be consecrated by "Three bishops, if possible from outside Ceylon, representing differing Church traditions" (p. 20, B(b) (i) ; and the Ghana Plan also associates ministers from outside its area in its very similar form of unification, though with an interesting variation in the procedure. This will not only make it clearer that the continuity of the historic episcopate is not something supplied only by the former Anglican bishops, but is linked with the wider and more ecumenical God-given tradition of episcopate. As Ghana puts it, "the ministers to be invited from outside Ghana to take part in the Unification of the Ministry shall be chosen with a view to emphasising that the United Church, Ghana, will, we pray, by God's grace be part of the one Catholic (or Universal) Church of Jesus Christ." This will indeed have a somewhat similar purpose to the tradition coming down from Nicaea that there should be at least three bishops taking part in a consecration, symbolising the 'catholic' intention of a divinely ordered ministry.

6. *The Nature of the Rite* : What then is this rite of unification and how are we to think of what is done in it ? It has been said that "Anglican opinion must be fully satisfied that the Prayers, the Laying-on of hands and the Formula, taken in conjunction with the Preface, are adequate to convey Holy Orders in the historic succession." That is one expert opinion. Lambeth 1958 expressed it in terms of a conveying of "the tradition of episcopal ordination," and the Preamble to the resolution of the CIPBC General Council of 1960 spoke of our conviction that "episcopal ordination is conveyed in the rite."

Such statements must be understood as referring not so much to a form of Service used but to the spiritual grace and authority bestowed by God in and through the forms used, and this was made very clear in the context of the statement in the Preamble. If the rite itself has to be regarded as an episcopal ordination Service, for it to bestow or convey what is needed for unification, then, as Bishop Newbigin pointed out, one who has already received episcopal ordination will be receiving such ordination a second time, which, as he said, would be either a "denial of the reality of his own ordination,—or else condoning a profanity."

It has become clearer that to identify the rite with a service of ordination would be a misinterpretation. What we have in these plans is a special and unique form of service, and, as Ceylon said, "no name or title can be given to describe the nature of this service, as it has no historical precedent." (Ceylon, p. 22). The Ghana Basis brings it out very clearly (p. 23) where it says, "This rite of Unification is unique, and cannot be identified either with any existing Rite of Ordination or with that to be used in future by the united Church."

But, if it is not an ordination, nor re-ordination, then what does happen? We must note that no one who has not been already ordained, no bishop not already consecrated, in some form or other, takes part in the rite. There is no ordination of new presbyters, no consecration of new bishops, within this act. Indeed, whatever differences there may have been in tradition and intention, all are recognised as having received and exercised a ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Church of God.

If then one were to ask whether those who have taken part in this service were receiving by it an episcopal ordination or consecration, the answer to the question in this form must be, No; because, as the Ghana Basis put it, it is not an ordination or

consecration service. But they will have received, we may be assured, whatever it may be that God sees each one of them to need for His ministry (including, as we Anglicans may believe, His gift of the grace of Holy Orders, where He sees that to be needed), and, with that enrichment, they will have been accepted by the Lord Himself as His ministers in the united Church and as such in the Church Universal; and therefore their ministry, whether of Word or of Sacrament must be acceptable and valid. Yes, and in the N. I./P. Plan this must surely apply to the bishops too, and when a bishop, (of whatsoever tradition) who has accepted this service of unification conducts thereafter an ordination or joins in a consecration in the united Church, that must be acceptable and valid, because this bishop has been accepted by God in this unification as His bishop. It may be that according to some he was a perfectly good bishop before. He is none the less that now. It may be that some thought he was not a real bishop before. At least he is a real one now, because we asked God to supply anything that might have been wanting and we can trust Him.

7. *A Venture of Faith*: Whether one regards this as possible or not will depend partly on whether one thinks that God is bound always to act in traditional ways, and partly also on whether one thinks that the Church is so bound by tradition that it cannot in all good faith do something new, where there is a sincere intention and the support and approval of a sufficient body of the Church to show that it is not acting in a schismatic spirit.

Those negotiating for union on these lines are doing so in the faith that God will meet the special situation and answer the prayers of His people in a new way, which should transcend the old differences of tradition and remove all old scruples. If a minister of a non-episcopal Church who has taken part in

such a service of unification were to be asked whether he had received episcopal ordination, he could well reply, "I was not episcopally ordained in my former separated Church, but at the inauguration of union I sought and believe that I received from God all that He deemed to be needed for my ministry in this united Church, a Church which is episcopally ordered."

Similarly for an Anglican bishop or priest taking part in the laying-on of hands in the rite, he will be humbly offering himself as a channel to be used by God for the bestowing of such grace as God deems to be needed in this case or in that. It is not for the minister to decide that he must in a certain case be bestowing 'episcopal ordination', or to presume to dictate what special gift God should bestow. The Plan now makes it clear that the uniting Churches "pledge themselves and fully trust each other that any bishop or presbyter officiating in the rite will do so with the sincere intention of placing himself unreservedly in the hands of God to be used as He wills, as a channel of His grace, commission and authority" (Plan, p. 52, para 10).

Thus from every point of view this unification rite is something new, a unique beginning and a venture in fellowship. All future ordinations within the united Church are to be episcopal, but this rite is a special act in the inauguration of the union, an assurance to all of God's acceptance of all, in penitence, humility and faith. And at the same time it does also serve as a historical link between the new united Church and all the uniting Churches (including the episcopal Churches), preserving a continuity in their faith and order.

8. *The Proposed Method* : In the light of this discussion we may now review the actual methods adopted in the plans we have been considering. The first step in them all is the actual inauguration of the united Church itself, at the end of which there

is thanksgiving and praise to God for the unity given by Him and accepted. What follows is thus enacted by a Church already united. Those taking part are already members of that united Church who have accepted its constitution and a membership in a Church which is to include the tradition of the historic episcopate along with the other traditions of presbyteral and congregational ordering.

(a) In the case of Ceylon the Service of Inauguration is immediately followed by the commissioning and consecration of the bishops of the united Church. Then each Bishop conducts, within a service of Holy communion, a separate unification of the presbyters and deacons in his own diocese. (Scheme II.8 & IV.7). In these services the united Church "intends only through prayer and the laying-on of hands to assure to her future presbyters whatever of the fullness of Christ's grace, commission and authority each may need for the performance of his proper office in this Church, and to provide a ministry fully accredited in the eyes of all its members and, so far as may be, of the Church throughout the world." (p. 25). The ministers make their declaration of this intention, and the Prayer before the laying-on of hands includes the petition, "Renew in them Thy blessings already given and do Thou pour upon them Thy Holy spirit to endue each according to his need with grace for the ministry of Presbyter in the Church of God and according to the order of the Church of Lanka." The wording of these central parts of the rite is closely parallel in the other plans of union in North India/Pakistan and in West Africa.

(b) In the case of N.I./P. and West Africa, as we have seen, the whole ministries, including bishops and presbyters, are to be

presented before God in the unification rite, and in North India the vast area requires a central representative Act which is continued by similar Acts of Unification in each diocese. The C.S.I. Service of the Lord's Supper is used, and the details may be found for N.I./P. in Part III of the Plan, and for Nigeria in their printed Scheme (1963), now slightly amended, along with the form of service subsequently issued.

After the reading of the Preface, giving the intention of the rite, the ministers of each uniting Church are presented by chosen laymen of their Church, and after they have signified their acceptance of the Plan, they all join in the Declaration (p. 64). Then

- (i) Representative ministers one from each of the Churches now united (the Anglican representative naturally being a bishop) together with the four ministers from Churches outside the area, say the Prayer all together and join in laying their hands on a chosen group of ministers (in N.I./P. three, including a bishop) using the Formula. When this has been done the representative ministers rejoin their respective delegations to be themselves received into the united ministry.
- (ii) The chosen group, now the nucleus of the united ministry, will then lay hands on the other ministers of each of the Churches now united, coming forward in turn in regional groups, saying the form of words for the bishops and presbyters severally in each group, and then laying hands on each member in silence.

It will be noticed that in the Prayer God's gifts are asked for the ministry "whether as bishop or as presbyter in the Church Universal and according to

the order of the Church of N.I./P.". And in the Formula the word 'bishop' is used when hands are to be laid on a bishop, and 'presbyter' in the case of the presbyters. When subsequent diocesan services are needed, as in N.I./P., there will again be a similar group, including the bishop of the diocese and presbyters who have already taken part in the central rite, who will continue the rite for the remaining presbyters and any deacons in each diocese.

After this all join in an ascription of praise to God and the service of the Lord's Supper continues with the Breaking of Bread and Communion.

- (c) While in this method no special priority given to the bishops in any separate all the united Churches are represent the commissioning of the chosen group all the ministers present will have laid on them after the Prayer.

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(c) While in this method no spécial priority is given to the bishops in any separate Act, all the united Churches are represented in the commissioning of the chosen group, and all the ministers present will have hands laid on them after the Prayer.

Anglicans may note that, as a matter of fact, every minister taking part in the rite will have had episcopal hands laid on him. That outward sign, which they treasure, is provided, but without committing anyone to any theory that it is essential.

Those in the non-episcopal Churches who have opposed the use of the laying-on of hands, owing largely to the association of that sign with an ordination, should realise how much the emphasis which we have come to lay on the unification as being a gift from God gives added point to what is said in the Plan regarding the use of this action, viz. that the "The laying-on of hands is adopted as a scriptural and traditional symbol of the bestowing of spiritual gifts by God." No other outward sign has been suggested which would give such suitable expression to what we have come to regard as the essence of the rite.

9. *Our claim* : We may claim, I think, that there has been a growing appreciation of the fundamental

rightness of the general method of initial unification, in which Ceylon, N.I./P. and West Africa are so largely agreed; and that the further revision has served to bring this out more clearly. In so far as this is the case, we may surely welcome and agree with the slightly amended form of the first para of the Preface in the N.I./P. rite, that

"It is the intention of this Church to continue the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon, and so reverently to use and esteem it that the whole body of the faithful in the Church of North India/Pakistan may be built up in their most holy faith and equipped for their ministry in the world."

On behalf of the C.I.P.B.C. Delegation
T. DONALD SULLY

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